

NSPS
Transition

*Manager
Supervisor*

Managing Employee

Performance

A Guide for Supervisors





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Background	2
Roles and Responsibilities	3
Planning for Performance	5
Establishing Expectations	5
Performance Planning Session	5
Establishing Performance Goals	6
Performance Plan Outcomes	8
Monitoring Performance	9
Teaming with Your Employees to Monitor Performance	9
Documenting Employee Performance	10
Employee Accountability for Performance	12
Providing Ongoing Feedback	12
Addressing Poor Performance	14
Coaching for Performance	15
Effective Questioning	16
Mid-Year Performance Conversation	17
Developing Performance	18
Helping Your Employees Establish Individual Development Plans	18
Rating Performance	20
Writing My Employee's Evaluation	20
Rating Performance	21
My Employee's Annual Appraisal Conversation	21
Discussing the Rating of Record	22
Rewarding Performance	23

Managing Employee Performance

A Guide for Supervisors **Intro**

Managing Employee Performance: A Guide for Supervisors assists supervisors in managing employee performance within the context of Department of Defense (DoD) performance management policy, guidance, and standards. The content is organized into five sections:

Planning for Performance

Monitoring Performance

Developing Performance

Rating Performance

Rewarding Performance

Background

A solid performance management system is the cornerstone of organizational excellence. Communication, accountability, and performance incentives are positive attributes of a performance management system that enables an organization to reach its goals.

The objective of performance management in accordance with Department of Defense (DoD) policy is to improve individual, team, and organizational performance by setting clear and concise employee expectations; monitoring progress; aligning measurable individual goals with larger organizational goals; and recognizing and rewarding individual accomplishments, demonstrated competencies, and contributions to mission. These system traits can drive organizations forward, while preserving valuable resources and cultivating high-performing cultures. While the Department uses several types of performance management systems, the systems share common attributes.

Each system:

- Is designed to meet the mission, goals, objectives, and management processes of the organization.
- Serves as a managerial tool that helps execute supervisory responsibilities; communicate organizational goals and objectives to employees; facilitate involvement in accomplishing organizational missions and goals; develop and implement programs; improve organizational effectiveness; and assess employee, team, and organizational performance.
- Uses appropriate measures of performance to recognize and reward employees.
- Uses the results of performance appraisal as a basis for appropriate personnel actions.
- Supports and is consistent with merit system principles and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) standards.

- Provides appropriate training.
- Encourages employees to take responsibility for supporting team endeavors, developing professionally, and performing at full potential.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of supervisors and employees are consistent within each performance management system.

Employees are responsible for contributing to a high-performance, high-involvement organization through their individual performance and accomplishments. Regular conversations with supervisors help employees establish goals and identify values and behaviors expected of them. Open communication with supervisors also helps employees document accomplishments and understand how performance expectations, conduct, and organizational mission and goals are linked. The employee should discuss his/her level of achievement in reaching established goals and be willing to accept constructive feedback to improve performance.

Supervisors are responsible for their individual and team performance and for creating a work culture and environment that promotes a high-performance, high-involvement organization. Supervisors are management officials in the direct supervision and line-of-sight of employees. They link employee goals to organizational mission; make meaningful distinctions in performance levels; evaluate employees based on performance; conduct all required performance-related conversations; and recommend ratings in accordance with the appropriate performance management system.



Responsibilities of Employees and Supervisors

Roles	Beginning of year	Throughout the year	End of year
Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for performance by drafting goals for the performance period; gain agreement with supervisor. • Establish a method for accomplishing and documenting achievement of goals. • Work towards the accomplishment of new goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work toward accomplishment of established goals. • Document accomplishments. • Communicate formally/ informally with supervisor regarding accomplishments and potential shortfalls in performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document assessment of performance according to established goals. • Participate in formal conversation with supervisor regarding past year's performance.
Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for performance by drafting goals for new year with employee(s) and gain agreement. • Establish a method for monitoring and documenting employee performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and document performance of employee(s). • Help employee(s) to develop. • Communicate formally/ informally with employee(s) regarding performance expectations, performance shortfalls, and accomplishments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document assessment of employee(s) performance according to the established goals. • Assign a rating of record. • Conduct formal conversation with employee(s) regarding past year's performance.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Civilian Personnel Policy)—DASD(CPP)—and the Heads of the DoD Components are two additional key players involved in the performance management process.

The DASD(CPP), under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, issues DoD performance management policies and procedures; establishes the DoD Performance Appraisal System; and develops, or assists in the development of, performance management programs, monitoring their implementation and effectiveness.

The Heads of the DoD Components ensure the development, implementation, application and evaluation of performance management programs within Components and ensure that programs established or revised after the effective date of the DoD Performance Appraisal System are in compliance with relevant DoD policies and procedures.

Planning for Performance

Performance planning is mandatory. Your employees must have written performance plans that document performance expectations and criteria. Typically, performance plans are established within 30 days of the start of the performance appraisal cycle or when an employee joins the organization.

Performance plans include the following elements:

Performance goals, objectives, elements, or standards¹ – Typically, these are the three to five priorities that the employee must focus on during the performance appraisal period. Performance goals are written at the “fully successful” or equivalent level. Writing expectations at the fully successful level provides employees with an opportunity to meet or exceed expectations.

Developmental goals – Provide direction on how employees can develop the skills and experience necessary to perform in their current roles and enhance their career opportunities. Developmental goals are often included in the individual development plan (IDP) section of the performance plan.

Establishing Expectations

Setting performance goals enables you and your employees to establish a mutual understanding of expectations and develop a concrete plan for the future. As a supervisor, you are responsible for establishing performance expectations for employees by engaging in regular conversations to ensure a shared understanding of expectations, particularly at the beginning of the performance appraisal cycle.

Performance Planning Session

During the performance planning session, meet with employees to develop a shared understanding of performance expectations for the coming performance period. Defining performance goals provides a clear picture of what achievement looks like, setting a foundation for performance and feedback throughout the year.

Five Phases of the Performance Management Cycle

1. Plan

At the beginning of the performance period, you and your employee develop a plan for performance, to include: performance goals, expected behaviors, individual development plan (IDP) goals, and a plan for documenting and discussing performance throughout the year.

2. Monitor
3. Develop
4. Rate
5. Reward



¹ Performance expectations are documented as performance goals, objectives, elements, or standards. Usage of these terms may vary based upon the particular performance management system. For the purpose of this guide, these terms may be used to describe performance expectations.

Consider using the checklist below to prepare for your discussion.

- ☐ Provide a copy of the organization's goals and the Agency's mission to your employee.
- ☐ Review performance standards issued by your organization.
- ☐ Review the employee's performance goals from last year and the year-end evaluation.
- ☐ Consider your employee's developmental needs or interests.
- ☐ Anticipate any potential barriers to success or challenges.
- ☐ Document performance and behavioral expectations and include them in the discussion.
Be sure to address:
 - The organization's goals and priorities
 - Work priorities
 - Specific tasks your employee should accomplish to successfully complete the performance goals
 - Timelines for completing tasks and noteworthy milestones.
- ☐ Review the employee's draft of the preliminary performance goals.

*Review the
employee's draft of
the preliminary
performance goals*

Establishing Performance Goals

Setting performance goals ensures that you and your employees have a shared understanding of performance expectations and a plan for the future. As a supervisor, you are responsible for communicating organizational goals and expectations to your employees, as well as helping your employees determine and document their goals.

Performance goals should be established at the beginning of the rating period. Performance goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART).

In addition, the PURE and CLEAR principles provide complementary guidance to help ensure that goals are accurate, well-written, comprehensible, and attainable.² PURE and CLEAR are useful to clarify goals after applying SMART.

Begin by using the SMART framework to develop performance goals.

S M A R T	SMART	
	Specific:	Goals should be clear and detailed.
	Measurable:	Goals must have observable, verifiable measures.
	Achievable/Agreed/Aligned:	The measures must be fully achievable by the employee and agreed upon by the supervisor and employee. Goals must be aligned with organizational goals and mission.
	Relevant:	Goals should have significance to the job duties of the employee and to the organizational goals and mission.
	Time-bound:	Goals must be measurable within the rating period, and it is helpful to have time-sensitive measures.



Your employees' individual goals should align with the organizational goals and mission.

² Whitmore, J. (2007). *Coaching for Performance: Growing People, Performance and Purpose*. Boston, MA: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Once performance goals have been developed according to the SMART framework, use the PURE and CLEAR principles as a second measure to verify for accuracy, achievability, comprehension, and compliance.

PURE

P U R E	Positively Stated:	The wording in goals should avoid words like: “don’t,” “won’t,” “not,” and “never.” State what is expected instead of what is not expected or what is prohibited.
	Understood:	Goals should be easily understood by the employee, supervisor, and anyone else in the performance management environment of that employee.
	Realistic:	Goals must be realistically achievable given the time, resources, and skills available.
	Ethical:	Employees should never be asked to do anything unethical or against the Merit Systems Principles.

CLEAR

C L E A R	Challenging:	Goals should be something for which an employee is challenged to attain.
	Legal:	All legal policies and procedures should be taken into account when developing and determining goals.
	Environmentally Sound:	An individual’s goals should not interfere with the accomplishment of another’s goals or with organizational mission and goals. Instead, they should support the performance environment.
	Appropriate:	An individual’s goals should be appropriate for the pay grade and level as well as the role to which the employee was hired.
	Recorded:	Goals should be documented and kept for at least the length of the performance cycle.

Is it observable, verifiable, or reportable?

You must define the measures you select to track the accomplishment of specific goals. You and your employee should agree upon how a measure will be observed, verified, or reported to avoid differences in opinion at the end of the year.

As you create and discuss performance goals, you may want to consider the following questions:

- ☐ Is a reporting or data capture method already in place?
 - If so, does it capture the data needed for the measurement, or does additional data need to be captured?
 - If additional data is needed, how will the data be captured?
 - Who is responsible for recording or reporting the data?
- ☐ Are there timeframes and/or deadlines to meet?
- ☐ How will behaviors be observed?
 - Whose observations are allowable?
 - How will it be reported?

- ☐ How is quality determined?
 - Who decides quality?
 - On what basis is it measured?
- ☐ Are absolute measures necessary and/or reasonable?
- ☐ What status checks will occur throughout the year to gauge, monitor, and develop performance?
- ☐ Is the measuring method documented in the goal so that anyone could understand how success is measured?

Is it meaningful?

Ambiguous measures create confusion about the result and benefit of the performance goal and might inadvertently promote undesired behaviors or results. Superfluous measurements can create an extra reporting burden on you and your employees. Therefore, during the process of identifying measurements, be sure to check if the measures are truly meaningful.

Consider the following questions to confirm that the measurements are indeed appropriate for successful completion of performance goals:

- ☐ Is the most important aspect of this goal being measured?
- ☐ What is the underlying purpose of this goal?
- ☐ What is the immediate effect/purpose/result/outcome that I expect accomplished with this goal?
- ☐ What is the long-term effect/purpose/result/outcome that I am trying to achieve?
- ☐ Do the measurements drive performance to desired results?
- ☐ What behaviors am I trying to foster or inhibit?
- ☐ How does this measurement ensure alignment with organizational goals?
- ☐ Does this measurement fully capture achievement of the expected result?
- ☐ Could any other measures more effectively capture the achievement of this goal or further supplement the measurement already identified?
- ☐ What defines success on this goal? What defines failure to meet this goal?
- ☐ What might be some unanticipated and undesired results of this measurement? How can I modify the measurement to minimize undesired results?

Suggested Wording for Measurements

- by means of
- by managerial review
- as determined by
- contingent upon
- acceptable to
- accepted by
- including at a minimum
- in accordance with
- as described by
- as indicated by
- as demonstrated by
- accurate according to
- actionable by
- completed by
- completed during
- completed within
- added value by
- was effective in
- showed efficiency by
- as reviewed by
- with error rate of

Performance Plan Outcomes

By the end of the planning phase, you should have met with your employees to discuss performance expectations, and each employee should have an approved performance plan that clearly identifies:

- ☐ Performance expectations documented as goals, objectives, or standards and written at the “fully successful” or equivalent level
- ☐ Developmental goals that document developmental, experiential, and training opportunities

Monitoring Performance

Teaming with Your Employees to Monitor Performance

As a supervisor, you should engage in ongoing performance discussions with your employees to provide feedback and ensure that you are fully aware of accomplishments, thus increasing employee opportunities for success.

The frequency and time required for ongoing performance discussions depends on several factors that can vary depending on the employee. These factors include your relationship with the employee, the issues you need to discuss with the employee, how often you work directly with the employee, and your understanding of the employee's work. By making small investments in time and effort throughout the year, you can cultivate a trusting environment and encourage employees to remain focused on achieving your organization's goals and priorities.

Use a checklist like the one shown here to prepare for and conduct ongoing performance discussions with employees. While it is a recommended best practice to hold these discussions in person, it is ultimately more important to engage in these conversations regularly than to wait until the final performance review. Regardless of your approach to these discussions, it is imperative that you adequately prepare and set aside a dedicated block of time for each conversation.

Did you know?

When asked to identify the most important traits of a good supervisor, employees mention that supervisors should be:

- Honest
- Forward-looking
- Inspiring
- Competent

Five Phases of the Performance Management Cycle

1. Plan

2. **Monitor**

Throughout the performance period, you should be aware of and monitor your employees' performance, noting opportunities to provide constructive feedback. Be sure to keep clear, specific documentation of your employees' performance for use in feedback sessions, formal performance conversations, and the final evaluation.

3. Develop

4. Rate

5. Reward



*... it is more important to
engage in conversations
regularly than to wait until
the final performance review*

Monitoring Performance Checklist

Questions	✓
Did I engage in routine discussions with the employee throughout the performance cycle about performance achievement, challenges, and improvement areas?	
Do I understand the employee's duties, the level of performance, and any challenges?	
Did I invest sufficient time in preparing for each discussion?	
Have I reviewed the employee's performance plan to ensure that the performance objectives are still relevant?	
Have I documented examples of successful performance and opportunities for improvement?	
Have I asked for the employee's perception of his/her own performance?	
Have I kept my supervisor informed of any performance-related issues with my employees?	

Documenting Employee Performance

Year-round documentation of employee performance helps track the details surrounding the accomplishment of goals and expected behaviors. This will make it easier for you to write evaluations and coach employees on writing self-assessments. The following table provides tips for documenting performance throughout the year.



Documentation DOs and DON'Ts

When tracking performance, keep in mind that it is not appropriate to document the following:

- **Activities or responsibilities:** Daily tasks and responsibilities do not require documentation unless results fall outside expectations.
- **Opinions and attitudes:** Only document behaviors and results. Keep all descriptions focused on observable behaviors and outcomes.
- **Unbalanced, slanted, or inaccurate information:** Even documentation about well-executed behaviors and results is flawed if, in a larger context, it paints a distorted picture of an employee's performance for the full year.

Documentation Quick Tips		
	Employee	Supervisor
What to Document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with your supervisor about performance and expectations • Completion of work products • Special or difficult circumstances you overcame and how you overcame them • Reporting mechanisms for tracking accomplishments • Complimentary messages from customers, peers, or employees about your performance related to your job objectives or expected behaviors • Copies of reports, studies, advisories, operating procedures, training materials or other documents you developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with employees about performance and expectations • Comments from others about employees' work • Status reports and other documents developed by employee • Observations of behavior • Actions and results
When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On a regular basis (weekly, monthly) throughout the performance period • Before and after performance conversations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the performance period • On a regular basis (weekly, monthly) • Before and after performance conversations
Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic or hard copy file or journal of performance-related discussions • Email folder for performance-related emails • Folder for status reports and other performance-related documents • Notes on planner or calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic or hard copy file • Email folder for performance-related emails • Folder for status reports
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized by goal • Relate accomplishments to specific goal(s) • Describe accomplishments in the context of relevant behaviors/values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized by employee, then by goal • Separate file (electronic or hard copy) for each employee • Relate accomplishments to specific goal(s) • Describe accomplishments in the context of the relevant behaviors/values
Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder of total performance • Reference for writing self-assessment • Preparation for performance conversations • History of work in case of transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminder of total performance of each employee • Reference for writing assessments • Preparation for performance conversations • Documentation in case future personnel actions are needed • Minimized reconsiderations • History of work in case of transfer

Employee Accountability for Performance

Being accountable for performance also means being responsible for accomplishing established performance goals or assignments. Requiring employees to plan for, discuss, and document their individual performance can lead to:

- improved performance
- more employee participation and involvement
- increased feeling of competency
- higher commitment to work
- fostered creativity and innovation
- higher employee morale and satisfaction with work

Employees' contributions to the organization will grow as they develop and monitor their own growth.

Providing Ongoing Feedback

Leadership IQ's study of employees, published in *T+D* magazine³, found surprising results regarding the extent to which employees sought frequent and constructive feedback from their supervisors.

According to a recent Leadership IQ study, “66 percent of employees report that they have little to no interaction with their bosses, up 13 percent from last year’s report.”

As a supervisor, you can provide meaningful feedback by detailing what behaviors should be repeated and by addressing specific areas for improvement. Using vague phrases like, “Good job,” “Superb,” “I need you to work harder,” and “This document is sub-par” might leave employees uncertain about their successes or improvement areas.

It is critical for performance discussions to be ongoing. Performance feedback is best shared in real-time as it enables employees to immediately apply what they have learned, and repeat or correct actions and behaviors.

To know what behaviors to repeat, employees need to know what you expect and how close they are to meeting or exceeding those expectations. There are two types of constructive feedback:

- **Positive feedback** provides accolades for a job well done or recognition of an admirable effort, thus reinforcing desired action(s).
- **Negative feedback** definitively cites undesirable behavior(s) to be improved upon and offers alternative methods or ideas for achieving a more desirable result in the future.

³Nancheria, A. (2009, December). *Please Boss Me Around*. *T+D*, 22.

The SEED framework presents an effective way to structure a feedback session.

SEED

S	Set goals for the session as well as for short- and long-term outcomes. It might be helpful to include these goals in the email requesting the session.
E	Examine for understanding of situations in order to determine the facts and dispel any rumors or assumptions.
E	Explore options and alternate strategies for resolving any challenges or performance shortfalls.
D	Determine actions for you and your employee in order to help the employee reach his or her goals. Document these in a follow-up email and/or formal performance documentation.

“Sixty-five percent of workers say that when they are criticized by their bosses, they don’t get enough information to correct the problem.”

This checklist is intended to guide you in providing ongoing feedback to your employees.

Communicating Checklist	
Questions	✓
Did I engage in routine discussions with the employee throughout the performance cycle that were focused on providing feedback and seeking understanding?	
Did I invest sufficient time in preparing for each discussion?	
Have I communicated examples of the employee’s successful performance and opportunities for improvement?	
Have I focused attention on the employee’s developmental goals during our discussions?	
Have I ensured that the employee is gaining the experiences and training he/she needs to perform current duties and future assignments?	
Have I asked the employee how as the supervisor, I could provide more support?	
If my supervisor asked my employees how I was coaching them, would my employees provide a positive report?	

“Fifty-three percent of employees reported that when their bosses do praise them, the information to help them repeat their performance is insufficient.”

Be sure to keep content, timing, frequency, and manner in mind when providing ongoing feedback. Follow these guidelines and hints:

Category	Hints on Providing Feedback
Content – What should I include in my feedback session?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly identify the topic or issue the feedback will address. • Provide specifics about what occurred and why you are giving feedback.
Timing & Frequency – When and how often should I provide my employee with constructive feedback on performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide both positive and negative constructive feedback as soon as possible so that the events and details are fresh in your mind and the employee's mind. • Provide feedback regularly to acknowledge the employee's performance and offer suggestions when appropriate. • Document performance regularly to avoid reliance on your memory.
Manner – How can I give the appropriate constructive feedback?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be direct when delivering your message. • Begin statements with “I” rather than “you” to avoid accusatory language (e.g., “I have noticed,” “I have observed,” “I have seen”). • Clearly explain your concerns and provide effective tools and appropriate suggestions for improvement. • State observations, not interpretations. Comment only on behaviors, not perceived attitudes. • In positive feedback situations, express appreciation. • In negative feedback situations, express concern and offer suggestions. • Avoid “need to” phrases, which send implied messages that something did not go well, and address feedback in a constructive manner. Coach employees to recognize and take responsibility for their own improved performance. • Be sincere and avoid giving mixed messages. • Give feedback one-on-one, in private, and in person.

Addressing Poor Performance

If an employee is performing poorly, you owe it to the employee, your team, and yourself to address the performance immediately. Do not wait until a required discussion, like the mid-year performance review or annual evaluation. Ignoring performance issues will not make them go away but could worsen the problem and create resentment.

Prepare:

-
- ☐ Document specific situations of poor performance.
 - ☐ Prepare suggestions for improving performance.
 - ☐ Document at least one specific example of successful performance.

Discuss:

-
- ☐ Honestly and openly discuss specific concerns.
 - ☐ Restate performance expectations.
 - ☐ Listen to the employee's perspective on concerns and obstacles.
 - ☐ Leverage examples of successful performance as starting point for improving performance in other areas.
 - ☐ Encourage the employee to explore and define options for a resolution and higher performance.
 - ☐ Discuss tools and resources needed to support employee, including training, mentoring, or checklists.

Action:

- ☐ Document the action plan and specific steps to address the poor performance. Provide the employee with a copy.
- ☐ Establish a follow-up session to monitor the employee's progress towards resolving the performance shortfall.
- ☐ Commit to continued monitoring and developing of the employee, with potentially increased supervision.
- ☐ Document, for the employee's performance file, what occurred in the meeting, including when the follow-up meeting is scheduled to take place, and specific, time-bound expectations for improvement.

Your employees expect you to provide them with the feedback they need to succeed. If you feel uncomfortable providing feedback or encounter a particularly difficult situation, you should reach out to:

- Your supervisor
- Your human resources office
- A trusted colleague

Coaching for Performance

Coaching can happen spontaneously or in a formal meeting. It is a challenging skill for many supervisors. Rather than providing advice or prescribing a solution, coaching sets the stage for the employee to come up with a resolution. You can coach employees through effective questioning, empowering them to proactively and consciously manage their own performance.

As a coach, you can help the employee identify and address obstacles that interfere with the employee's ability to accomplish a goal, such as:

- External obstacles, including: busy schedule, limited resources, interactions with others, or incomplete information.
- Internal obstacles, including: fear of failure, self-doubt, inability or unwillingness to change, inability to visualize success, unwillingness to make a decision, poor time management, or misunderstanding of expectations.

Coaching means fostering an employee's awareness, responsibility, and ownership of ideas, actions, and goals, which are crucial elements of good performance.

Successfully conducting regular coaching sessions takes patience and practice but is well worth the effort. You will be pleasantly surprised with how well your employees respond to and appreciate your commitment to their success. Giving continuous feedback demonstrates your dedication to building a positive and trusting relationship with employees and assists them with improving performance. It also helps you improve your performance as a supervisor.

Effective Questioning

Much of the monitoring phase occurs through effective questioning, which is particularly useful when addressing poor performers.

Effective questioning:

1. Compels the employee to take responsibility for his or her actions and to perform the desired action(s).
2. Allows the employee to focus more clearly on what is needed.
3. Describes the desired behavior instead of prescribing and judging it.
4. Creates a feedback loop whereby the supervisor can determine if the employee understands and takes responsibility for his or her actions.

Challenge yourself to compose your performance management questions ahead of time, especially when preparing to address poor performance. Focus on taking judgment and accusations out of your questions and instead ask questions that guide employees to discover and take responsibility for managing and improving performance. Use coaching techniques to unlock the employee's potential to maximize performance.

One such example is that of a coach working with a baseball player who is struggling to hit the ball. Effective question phrasing can impact the outcome of the supervisor-employee interaction in this simple situation.

Consider these questions:

- Did you watch the ball?
- Why are you not watching the ball?

*Challenge yourself to compose
your performance management
questions ahead of time*

How would you feel as the player? Defensive? Accused? Perhaps you would feel like you did not have the opportunity to respond, or as if the coach already made an assumption about what you were and were not doing and why.

What if the coach used questions more like these:

- Which way is the ball spinning as it comes towards you?
- How close is it to flying over/outside/inside the plate?
- Did the ball come in straight or with a curve?
- When the ball is coming towards you, what do you feel like doing?

How do these questions differ from the initial ones? How would you feel as the player?

Mid-Year Performance Conversation

During the mid-year performance conversation, which typically occurs at the mid-point of the performance cycle, you and your employee discuss his or her progress in accomplishing goals, issues that are potentially impeding progress, and developmental needs. This conversation presents a good time to review performance goals and expected behaviors to determine if any adjustments are needed. Before you participate in this discussion, review this checklist to make sure you are fully prepared.

- ☐ Review the employee's performance plan and work priorities, noting your employee's performance thus far as compared to goals and expected behaviors.
- ☐ Review the organization's goals and priorities, and note any changes that might affect your employee's performance plan.
- ☐ Review your notes on your employee's performance to date.
- ☐ Complete thorough, specific documentation of the employee's performance.
- ☐ Create an agenda for the conversation and plan your feedback.
- ☐ Note specific examples of performance and behaviors.
- ☐ Think about the tasks the employee has completed or ones that still require completion. Note any problems the employee has solved or that need to be solved.
- ☐ Consider areas where the employee is performing well and where support or training may be needed.
- ☐ Remember to keep the conversation focused on progress to date. At this time, avoid speculating on or discussing rating of record and potential rewards.



Developing Performance

Helping Your Employees Establish Individual Development Plans

Throughout the performance period, you should:

- Work with and support employees in achieving developmental goals.
- Remove obstacles or potential barriers to success.
- Review their individual development plans (IDPs).

The IDP is the employee's action plan for developing the skills and competencies required to perform in the current job and to acquire the knowledge and experience needed for career progression.

An IDP:

- Identifies short- and long-term career goals
- Documents training and developmental activities to complete during the year
- Tracks the employee's accomplishments towards completing training and developmental activities
- Should be frequently reviewed and discussed with the employee throughout the year
- Can help the employee become more qualified for a new position by identifying relevant knowledge, skills, abilities, and developmental activities to reach career goals

An IDP is a living document that should be reviewed and updated throughout the year by the employee with your input. It provides a means for you to support your employee by targeting developmental opportunities that will help him or her obtain the skills needed to fulfill responsibilities identified in the performance plan and achieve short- and long-term career goals.

Five Phases of the Performance Management Cycle

1. Plan
2. Monitor
3. **Develop**
4. Rate
5. Reward

Throughout the performance period, you support your employees in reaching development goals by implementing their IDPs.



You play an important role in helping the employee develop his or her IDP and monitor progress throughout the year. You are responsible for:

- Identifying organizational goals and future trends
- Discussing your employee's progress throughout the cycle
- Helping your employee modify his or her IDP, as appropriate
- Developing realistic developmental goals
- Locating training and developmental opportunities
- Reviewing your employee's accomplishments at the end of the performance cycle, so you can appropriately plan for the upcoming year
- Making employee career goals a priority
- Providing the time necessary to take advantage of developmental opportunities
- Removing obstacles that might hinder developmental opportunities
- Initiating ongoing developmental conversations with employees

Employees are expected to:

- Take responsibility and be accountable for their career development
- Identify individual strengths and improvement areas relative to occupational requirements and organizational goals
- Engage with you early and often to discuss career management activities and track progress
- Utilize available tools and resources to assist with satisfying occupational requirements and achieving career goals



Rating Performance

Writing My Employee's Evaluation

An evaluation is your written narrative assessment of the employee's performance as related to his or her documented goals. Based on the documentation you compiled throughout the year, you can describe your employee's accomplishments, behaviors he or she exhibited in performing the work, and contributions he or she has made toward meeting the organizational goals and priorities by addressing each performance goal in your evaluation.

A good evaluation includes:

- **Accomplishments and results:** Describe the employee's impact on the organization's mission and goals. Focus on results instead of tasks.
- **Performance Level:** Include wording that describes the employee's level of performance for each goal.
- **Behaviors:** Describe how the employee exhibited the expected behaviors/values while achieving his or her goals.
- **Challenges and added value:** Describe how the employee overcame challenges and dealt with special circumstances. Include wording that describes how the employee added value to the organization.

An effective evaluation should answer these key questions:

- What did the employee achieve?
- How well did the employee achieve it?
- How did it help the organization?
- What expected behaviors did the employee exhibit?
- What special circumstances made the employee's accomplishment significant?

Five Phases of the Performance Management Cycle

1. Plan
2. Monitor
3. Develop
4. **Rate**

At the end of the performance period, you compile the performance documentation to write the employee's evaluation and discuss the year's performance with the employee. Assign a rating of record in accordance with the performance management system.

5. Reward



DO	DON'T
✓ Set aside uninterrupted time to reflect and write.	✗ Rush through writing at the last minute.
✓ Review the appropriate performance management documentation before you start writing.	✗ Write an assessment that is unlinked to the performance plan.
✓ Review documentation of accomplishments and determine which are the most significant in terms of contribution to mission and organizational goals.	✗ Rely on your memory to recall all accomplishments within the performance period.
✓ Use active verbs to describe actions and accomplishments.	✗ List tasks performed.
✓ Be specific and concise.	✗ Be flowery and verbose.
✓ State the level of performance at the beginning of the narrative (i.e., “The employee met the expectations established for this performance goal” or “My employee exceeded expectations on this goal”).	✗ Leave the employee and other readers wondering how you felt your employee performed against the goals.
✓ Spell out acronyms and explain terms that might be unfamiliar to other readers.	✗ Use acronyms or terms with which other readers might not be familiar.
✓ Focus on accomplishments only within the current performance period.	✗ Cite accomplishments from past performance periods.
✓ Note how challenges were overcome.	✗ Assume the other readers will infer the challenges.
✓ Relate individual accomplishments to team goals.	✗ Attribute credit for team accomplishments solely to the individual.
✓ Describe any instances where performance exceeded expectations.	✗ Attribute high performance without substantiating it.
✓ Provide specifics on measurable or qualitative results and describe the relation to organizational goals.	✗ Leave other readers wondering why the accomplishments were important.
✓ Explain accomplishments in a way that someone unfamiliar with the work would understand.	✗ Assume the pay pool panel is aware of individual accomplishments.
✓ Use spelling and grammar check and reread writing.	✗ Assume grammar and spelling do not matter.

Rating Performance

As part of the rating process, you should:

- Understand the performance management system’s rating protocol.
- Appropriately evaluate and rate employees based on the performance standards established in the performance plan and the accomplishments associated with each standard.
- Schedule a meeting with your employee to discuss your evaluation of him or her and the final rating of record.

My Employee’s Annual Appraisal Conversation

During the annual appraisal conversation, you and your employee discuss performance and final rating of record. The following list can help you prepare for the annual appraisal conversation.

Discuss these essential topics:

- ☐ The employee's rating of record and the tie to performance
- ☐ The employee's performance against each goal and expected behavior

Consider discussing these recommended topics:

- ☐ Informal/formal training and growth opportunities
- ☐ Potential barriers and opportunities for success in the coming year
- ☐ The employee's options for reconsideration

Remember to:

- ☐ Bring a copy of your evaluation of the employee and review the employee's self-assessment prior to the meeting.
- ☐ Refresh yourself on the goals and performance.
- ☐ Show the relationship between the employee's performance and any pay changes.
- ☐ Keep conversations on track.
- ☐ Listen to the employee's concerns.
- ☐ Clarify the employee's concerns.
- ☐ Focus on the conversation.
- ☐ Stick to the facts.
- ☐ Keep emotions under control.
- ☐ Articulate specific examples of good performance and opportunities for improvement.

Discussing the Rating of Record

You are required to share the rating of record with your employee. Like all other performance feedback, you are advised to share this information in person, and it is imperative that you share it in private. Take the opportunity to coach your employee by providing direct links from performance to the rating of record using specific examples.

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If the rating is not what your employee was expecting, you may encounter defensive or angry behavior. It is your responsibility to keep the meeting on a professional level and to guide the meeting in a constructive manner. Be prepared for this situation by:

- ☐ Having specific examples of behaviors that warrant the rating.
- ☐ Having the performance standards available for reference.
- ☐ Speaking in a calm, professional manner.
- ☐ Allowing the employee to voice concerns while focusing the conversation on the link between performance and the final rating.
- ☐ Brainstorming possibilities and scenarios for demonstrating higher performance the following year.
- ☐ Being ready to develop an action plan with the employee for future, higher performance.

Supervisors can prepare for difficult conversations regarding the final rating of record by:

- ☐ Providing clear, constant communication throughout the year that is focused on coaching for performance.
- ☐ Providing constructive feedback that builds employee awareness and responsibility.
- ☐ Communicating early and often to identify and resolve performance shortfalls.
- ☐ Coaching the employee on thorough performance documentation.
- ☐ Documenting thoroughly and specifically throughout the year.

Rewarding Performance

Performance rewards, depending on your organization's performance management system, may come in the form of annual bonuses, salary increases, awards throughout the year, time-off awards, or others. Irrespective of the timing or type, awards should be performance-based and used as a tool to promote a culture of high performance, reward successful performers, and promote even greater future performance.

As part of the award process, you should:

- Know the performance management system's reward protocol
- Communicate the reward and performance specifics formally, in writing, and in person to encourage good performance and enhance overall performance

Consider the following four scenarios on rewarding performance and each situation's potential effect on the employee's perception and future performance.

Scenario 1

Supervisor Paul slips a time-off award certificate on Ben's chair while he is at lunch. Ben, in finding the certificate upon his return from lunch, is excited but a little confused. Is this a reward for that project he completed last month? Has his boss really noticed his effort to be more professional with customers? Or is the reward for something else he's done? Ben concedes to just accept the reward without fully knowing what he did to deserve it. Maybe he will ask Paul before the staff meeting on Wednesday.

Paul missed an opportunity to reinforce Ben's actions and/or behavior as well as the opportunity to coach Ben to greater performance in the future.

Taking it a step further...

Five Phases of the Performance Management Cycle

1. Plan
2. Monitor
3. Develop
4. Rate
5. **Reward**

At the end of the performance period (or within the period), you reward employee performance according to your organization's performance management system. Use the reward to celebrate past performance and encourage future performance.



Scenario 2

Supervisor Paul hands Ben a time-off award certificate as he passes him in the hallway. Paul says, “Great job last month, Ben!” Ben is excited about the award, but is also slightly confused as to what accomplishments from last month are being rewarded. He turned in a big project, but it was a day late. He knows a customer sent a beaming email about his performance to Paul. Ben wonders if getting a project finished, even if it is late, exceeds Paul’s expectations, or if Paul values customer feedback so highly that he rewards it.

Paul thinks he is reinforcing Ben’s good performance, but Ben is still confused as to the specific performance that is being rewarded. Paul is still missing the opportunity to coach Ben to greater performance in the future.

A definite improvement...

Scenario 3

Supervisor Paul sends Ben an email, scheduling a short meeting for tomorrow morning. Ben, not knowing what the meeting is about, wonders all evening if perhaps he has received a customer complaint or if the project he turned in recently does not meet expectations. The next morning, Ben apprehensively walks into Paul’s office and is greeted with a handshake and a time-off certificate. Paul says, “Great work with the customers. I love getting happy emails about my people.” Ben still wonders what Paul thought of his project, but deduces that customers must be his first priority, and he should prompt them to write happy emails more often in the future.

Paul scheduled a specific time to reward Ben in private and thinks he has reinforced Ben’s performance with the customers, but he was not very specific in his praise. Ben might have the wrong idea that customer emails are the only measure of success. Paul is still missing the opportunity to coach Ben to specifically greater performance in the future.

Much better.

Scenario 4

Supervisor Paul uses his regularly scheduled, weekly check-in meetings with Ben to present him with a time-off award certificate. Paul and Ben have a culture of discussing performance on a regular basis, so Ben is clear on what Paul expects of him and where he is exceeding expectations. Paul and Ben have developed an action plan together by which Ben is improving his performance on meeting deadlines. Paul and Ben celebrated the happy customer's email when it arrived three weeks ago, and Paul congratulated Ben at the staff meeting the previous week. The time-off award certificate has finally been approved by Paul's boss, so Paul uses the end of their weekly meeting to congratulate Ben again on the performance that the customer commended.

Paul has created a coaching culture to develop Ben. Rewarding him for good performance flows naturally from a relationship of feedback and growth. This reward, along with the coaching, enables Ben to more clearly understand expectations and exceed them in the future.



It is important to note that while it is the supervisor's responsibility to provide clear, specific feedback and direction to the employee on the behaviors or actions being rewarded (and on those that may require improvement), it is also imperative for the employee to ask questions during discussions and request clarification when needed to ensure a full understanding of expectations and how to enhance future performance.

